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## **Birkholz urging DEQ and governor to apply for federal beach protection grants**

**LANSING** – Sen. Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township, today announced she will be introducing a resolution urging the Department of Environmental Quality and the governor to promptly apply for a federal grant worth approximately \$282,500 for beach protection and clean up.

The grants, part of President George W. Bush's Clean Beach Plan, are for beach monitoring and notification programs to ensure safe beaches for visitors around the country. They are designed to help states and territories meet the requirements under the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000. This year, nearly \$10 million is available for eligible areas.

“Given the amount of shoreline and recreational beaches Michigan has, it is imperative we apply for this grant to keep our beaches clean and protect our beachgoers,” Birkholz said. “The DEQ and governor should apply immediately to ensure we receive as much funding as possible. We cannot allow these funds to go to waste if we want to continue to attract tourists to our coastal areas.”

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that Americans take a total of 910 million trips to coastal areas each year and spend about \$44 million at those beach locations.

The BEACH Act requires coastal states, territories and tribes to adopt up-to-date pathogen criteria to protect beachgoers from harmful bacteria. The grants will help expand water quality monitoring and information programs to alert the public about potential health-related problems in coastal recreational areas.

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